A Review of Policing in Northern Alberta

Findings & Recommendations

NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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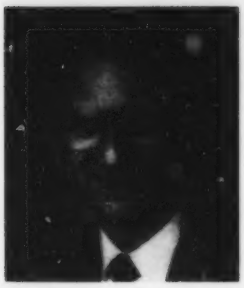
Northern Alberta Development Council (1992 - 1993)



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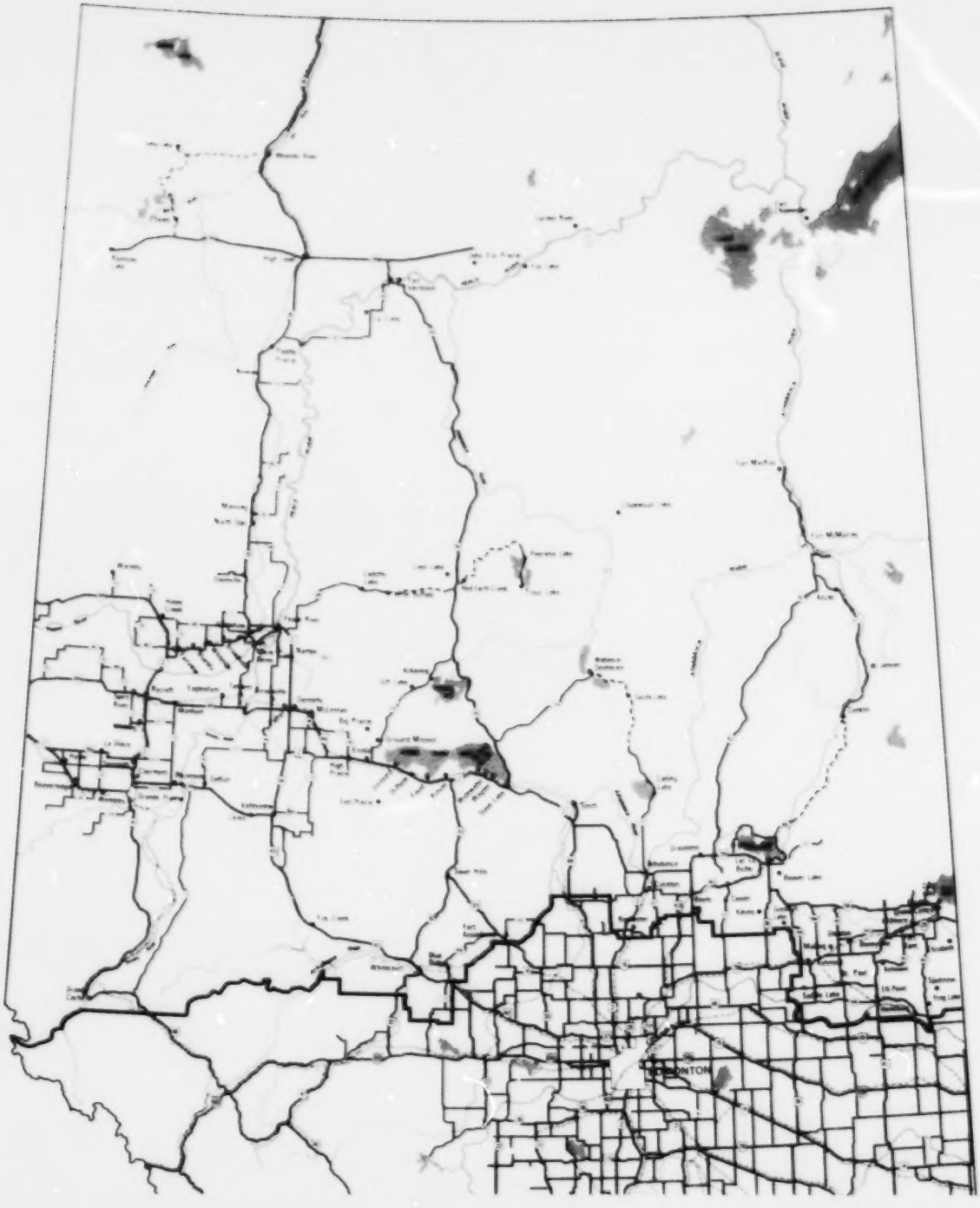

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October, 1992

The Northern Alberta Development Council is pleased to present "A Review of Policing in Northern Alberta: Findings and Recommendations."

In response to numerous public briefs about policing costs and services, the Northern Alberta Development Council, in cooperation with the RCMP and Alberta's Solicitor General, commissioned a study to review policing in northern Alberta. This study provided background information to delegates at a seminar held in Lac La Biche in June of 1992.

Fulfilling its role as an advisor to government, the NADC has prepared a set of recommendations based on the consultant's research results and on the conclusions reached at the seminar.

The NADC believes that this position paper represents the key issues related to policing as they affect communities in northern Alberta today.

Bob Elliott

Bob Elliott, MLA
Chairman

Overview

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) was established in 1963 as a five-member advisory group for government. Ten years later, through the Northern Alberta Development Council Act, Council's size was changed to 10 members. The Act gave the NADC the responsibility to "investigate, monitor, evaluate, plan and promote practical measures to foster and advance general development in northern Alberta and to advise the government in matters respecting:

- social and economic development
- development of communities
- development of government services and programs to meet the needs of northern Alberta"

Since 1973, the NADC has received more than 2500 briefs from northerners on issues related to northern development. Many of those briefs led to NADC-sponsored research studies and program reviews, and subsequent policy recommendations to the provincial cabinet.

In response to recent public briefs about policing costs and services, the NADC, in cooperation with the RCMP and Alberta's Solicitor General, commissioned a study to review policing in northern Alberta. A northern steering committee was selected to oversee the study. It consisted of town councillors and administrators, local and regional RCMP officials, native and community representatives, a member of the Solicitor General's department, and the NADC.

The steering committee chose the consulting firm Alberta Management Group to undertake the research project. The objectives of the study were to:

- identify municipalities with unusually high policing expenditures
- review factors that led to high policing costs
- describe community involvement in policing
- identify existing or new cost-effective policing strategies

The study provided background information to the delegates at an NADC-sponsored seminar, "Policing in Northern Alberta," held in Lac La Biche on June 4th and 5th, 1992. The research findings and the results of the seminar workshops are the basis for the position paper that follows.

This report serves three purposes:

- First, it makes recommendations to the Alberta government and the RCMP in the form of a position paper, based on the public consultations made before and during the seminar. These recommendations explain how our policing system needs refining to make it more effective.

- Second, this report contains a summary of events from the seminar in Lac La Biche.

- Third, this document presents a summary of Alberta Management Group's technical report on policing in northern Alberta. The complete technical report is available on request from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

Position Paper

Part One

NADC Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research project, and through extensive public consultation at nine focus group meetings and a major seminar, the Northern Alberta Development Council recommends the following:

Financing

There are many northern municipalities with both high crime rates and high police costs. Moreover, some municipalities have extraordinarily high policing costs. Special northern circumstances which contribute to high costs include rapid community growth, ethnic and cultural diversity, services to remote and distant locations and non-resident policing needs.

Policing is a major expense for many northern communities with municipal policing contracts. In response, municipal officials wish to take measures which will contain those costs.

NADC Recommendations

1. The Solicitor General should review existing funding structures and the Municipal Police Assistance Grant to address the issue of fairness for those municipalities with very high policing costs.
2. "K" Division and the local detachment should work with northern municipalities to identify and implement local cost containment ideas.
3. The RCMP and northern communities should jointly develop expanded use of auxiliary constables, special constables and clerical support to fulfil lower level functions.

Community Policing

Northern communities wish to increase their influence in how policing affects them. A range of mechanisms are available to allow the public a greater role in community policing. The NADC believes that public involvement in policing is the most important factor in the future prevention and management of crime.

Communities need a clearer idea of how they can have meaningful input into policing priorities and procedures.

Native communities experience special challenges. For example, many native communities have extreme levels of youth crime. Improved intervention strategies combined with community based programming are important steps needed in native communities.

NADC Recommendations

4. A clear vision for the role of Community Advisory Committees in northern Alberta should be developed by the RCMP in partnership with northern communities. A user or participant manual which covers roles and directions for successful implementation is needed.
5. Social service agencies should continue to support programs and services which aim to reduce the incidence of youth crime, family violence and substance abuse.
6. Governments should continue to support new policing initiatives, such as aboriginal police services, which meet the unique needs of the north's native communities.

Police Approach

Northerners want to see a greater emphasis on the problem solving, peace keeping and crime prevention roles of their police services. This can be accomplished by modifying the approach used to deliver police services. Police services can be significantly improved by adapting more to the unique needs of each community. Northerners believe police officer involvement in community life is important.

NADC Recommendations

7. Municipalities should be encouraged by the RCMP to contribute to local priority setting. It is anticipated that this will lead to the introduction of new community based crime prevention programs.
8. The RCMP should continue to establish satellite offices particularly in northern remote and native communities.
9. The RCMP should adopt an officer placement approach that matches police personnel with the unique characteristics of northern communities.
10. The RCMP should continue to support and recognize the contributions police officers make as citizens of northern communities.

Justice System

The justice system has a major impact on the cost of policing. Northerners believe that, overall, the criminal justice system is not working well. Northerners expressed concerns regarding lengthy delays in court scheduling, lack of effective corrections and restitution measures in some cases and poor accountability to the public. In particular, the Young Offenders Act should be re-evaluated to address concerns about repeat offenders and their effect on policing costs.

NADC Recommendations

11. The Attorney General should seek ways to reduce delays in the court processes which have a negative impact on policing costs.
12. The Attorney General should encourage programs that reflect community values and make sentencing more appropriate and effective.

Seminar Report

Part Two

Policing In Northern Alberta

Seminar Agenda *McArthur Place, Lac La Biche, Alberta*

Thursday, June 4, 1992

Seminar Opening

Welcoming Comments & Seminar Overview
Speakers: Bob Elliott, MLA, Chairman NADC, Beaverlodge
Mike Cardinal, MLA Athabasca - Lac La Biche
Tom Maccagno, Mayor, Lac La Biche

Keynote Address

Trends and Challenges in Policing Today
Moderator: Don Lussier, NADC, Athabasca
Speaker: Chris Braiden, Superintendent, Edmonton Police Service

Overview of NADC Policing Report

Moderator: Larry Langager, NADC, St. Paul
Speaker: John Chase, Partner, Alberta Management Group, Edmonton

Small Group Discussions

Steps Toward Enhanced Policing in Northern Alberta
Sessions: Group A - Community Involvement in Policing
Group B - Policing in Native Communities
Group C - Impact of the Justice System on Policing
Group D - Future Policing Roles
Group E - Financing of Policing Services

Panel Presentation

Opportunities in Policing Policy and Practice
Moderator: Pearl Calahasen, MLA, NADC, Grouard
Speakers: Ed Hahn, Executive Director, Law Enforcement Division, Alberta Solicitor General, Edmonton
W. L. (Bill) Donahue, Superintendent, Officer-in-Charge, Contract Policing Branch, RCMP "K" Division, Edmonton

Friday, June 5, 1992

Small Group Discussions (continued)

Reports from Small Group Discussions

Moderator: Marlin Sexauer, NADC, Whitecourt
Speakers: Group A - Community Involvement in Policing
Irene Salisbury, Councillor, Town of High Prairie
Group B - Policing in Native Communities
Harvey Cunningham, Metis Settlements Transition Commission
Group C - Impact of the Justice System on Policing
Floyd McLennan, Mayor, Town of Grande Cache
Group D - Future Policing Roles
Inspector Don Baird, RCMP "K" Division, Edmonton
Group E - Financing of Policing Services
Bernie Kreiner, Administrator, Town of Slave Lake

Seminar Summary Panel

Impressions and Directions for Policing in Northern Alberta
Moderator: Bob Elliott, MLA, Chairman, NADC, Beaverlodge
Speakers: Cleve Cooper, Chief Superintendent RCMP, "K" Division, Edmonton
Albert Moghrabi, Councillor, Town of Lac La Biche
Chris Braiden, Superintendent, Edmonton Police Service

Provincial Address

Moderator: Bob Elliott, MLA, Chairman NADC, Beaverlodge
Speaker: Hon. Stephen West, Alberta Solicitor General Vermilion-Viking

Seminar Adjournment

Moderator: Bob Elliott, MLA, Chairman NADC, Beaverlodge

Opening Remarks

Bob Elliott

Bob Elliott, MLA, Grande Prairie, and chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council, opened the seminar by welcoming the approximately 120 delegates to Lac La Biche. He introduced NADC members and commented on the briefs the Council had received concerning policing. Dr. Elliott mentioned that northerners have expressed concern about rising policing costs and crime rates. He noted how policing has been at the centre of public and political controversy lately, with events such as the Los Angeles and Toronto riots. He also mentioned the growing movement to mould police services around the individual communities they serve.

Dr. Elliott encouraged the delegates to share their ideas and experience in the workshops and panel discussions to follow. He spoke of the positive results of previous seminars, and how they directly affected policy making at the provincial cabinet level. He then introduced Mike Cardinal, MLA Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

Mike Cardinal

Mr. Cardinal welcomed delegates to the Policing in Northern Alberta Seminar. He was impressed at the range of experience and regional representation among the delegates. Mr. Cardinal remarked how policing needs in the north are linked with poverty and unemployment. He mentioned how improving social conditions would help reduce crime. He also spoke of recent efforts to improve the justice and welfare systems, some of which have already dramatically reduced the local RCMP caseload. Mr. Cardinal wished delegates a productive seminar and left the podium to the mayor of Lac La Biche, Tom Maccagno.

Tom Maccagno

Mayor Maccagno thanked NADC for sponsoring the seminar and commended the pre-seminar research done by Alberta Management Group. He said the findings confirm the perceptions held by his colleagues in the Northern Alberta Mayors Caucus: the criminal justice system is failing us, the Youth Offenders Act is not working, and repeat offenders are a major problem. Mayor Maccagno said he didn't think more police officers would solve the policing problems of the north. He concluded that direct community involvement, an emphasis on crime prevention, and effective leadership was the answer.

Keynote Address

Chris Braiden

NADC councillor Don Lussier introduced keynote speaker Chris Braiden, Superintendent, Edmonton Police Service. Mr. Braiden pioneered storefront police offices in Edmonton communities. His writings on community policing have become part of an international body of literature on the subject. His speaking style suggests that as well as being a policeman, he is a futurist and a philosopher. He spoke on "Trends and Challenges in Policing Today."

Mr. Braiden began by placing policing in a historical perspective. He noted that the police have not been under public scrutiny for the last three decades. Only since the mid-1980s have critics and researchers looked into how much of a monopoly the police have had over law enforcement and protection. Mr. Braiden reminded delegates of the first police force, established by Lord Peel in London, England in 1829. Peel's intention was for the police to be formed according to the needs of the community. This meant that the police were of, by, and for the people. Since the main consumers of police services were of the working class, the bulk of police officers were also recruited from the working class. They knew the people in the neighborhoods they patrolled, and they knew when certain behavior required the enforcement of the law.

Mr. Braiden contrasted today's model of policing with that of Lord Peel's. Policing has evolved into a bureaucracy-based system of law enforcement, as opposed to a community-based system that works "in the interests of community welfare and existence." A bureaucracy thrives on figures, and thus the modern police service judges its performance in terms of figures. Crime rates, populations, numbers of police officers, efficiency of technological improvements, are all tangible indicators used in the quest for police efficiency.

Often the most important figures in policing are unknown or unknowable, said Mr. Braiden. It is "moments of truth" that count, those moments where the police officer is talking to a citizen, or visiting a local Boys and Girls Club; moments where police policy (even something as simple as limited police office hours) is touching the person it serves. It is here where the "Hollywood-based" model of policing fails. This model, followed by police services big and small across North America, promotes "buying" a quality police force. The shopping list includes up-to-date weapons, communications equipment, automobiles, evidence detecting equipment, and more police officers.

Such a model of policing has led the justice system to demand greater technical evidence and documentation to bring a criminal to justice. This means that the police officer is not encouraged or in some cases even allowed to use their own discretion, and they become bogged down with the details of law enforcement.

Mr. Braiden suggests there are several challenges facing police to bring them back to a community-based policing model. He said, "You can't buy quality, it can only come from the minds and hearts of people doing the job." Police need to be more than just law enforcers. Along with weapons and technology, they have to be able to use all the tools at their disposal — tools like wit, humour, sensitivity, humility, character, and altruism. Policy makers must make an intellectual shift, said Braiden. They have to let the police use these tools at their own discretion, as the criminal code originally allowed.

Mr. Braiden suggested police follow the model of the family doctor. Just as family doctors adjust their practices to the health needs of the communities they serve, so should police adjust to the policing needs of the communities they serve. Mr. Braiden finished by stressing that a multitude of opinions are needed from all concerned to change our policing system.

Overview of the NADC sponsored report, "Policing in Northern Alberta"

John Chase

NADC councillor Larry Langager introduced John Chase, Partner, Alberta Management Group, Edmonton. Mr. Chase outlined some of the major findings of the research study carried out by the Alberta Management Group:

- Nine of the 18 municipal RCMP detachments, and eight of the 30 rural RCMP detachments in the NADC area, were in the high policing cost per capita category. This means 47 per cent of detachments in the NADC area are ranked high, compared to 16 per cent in the same category for detachments outside the NADC area.

- The main reasons cited for high policing costs were:
  - police time for appearing and testifying in court
  - police paperwork and overtime
  - rising crime rates
  - police equipment requirements

- Northerners thought their communities were affected most by problems such as drinking and driving, vandalism, break and enter, theft, youth crime, and family violence. They saw the leading causes of these problems being drug and alcohol abuse, breakdown of traditional values and ways of living, and family breakdown.

- Community residents had an important role to play in policing, yet most communities had few effective programs that allowed for residents to participate. The key issues were:
  - residents appear reluctant to get personally involved in reporting crimes to the police
  - a loss of confidence in the justice system
  - residents feel they have little influence in the policing of their communities
  - treatment programs for problems such as alcoholism and battering were either lacking or were not reaching those at risk of falling into crime, especially youth

- Some communities had undertaken significant crime prevention initiatives. Some were using volunteers to help police in areas such as providing security at community functions, assisting victims, taking evidence, and providing court orientation. Several communities had exemplary programs in traditional areas such as Citizens on Patrol and Crime Watch.

- There was overall support for the RCMP, but residents see the role of the police changing. They want:
  - to find the causes of crime and possible solutions
  - more crime prevention programs
  - more face-to-face interaction with police
  - police integrating themselves socially with the community

- Police were innovative in some communities by establishing remote satellite offices; for example, a pilot project was under way in Grande Prairie to delegate more decision-making to the local detachment.

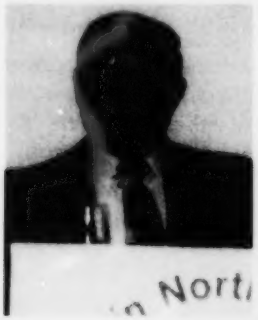
- People are dissatisfied with the justice system. They see:
  - sentencing of criminals as "too soft" and inconsistent
  - the Young Offenders Act as being too weak
  - the system as being too institutional — out of the hands of the community and lacking in useful restitution and reconciliation measures
  - the police spending too much time in court
  - too many demands placed upon the courts

- Residents believe that police funding is not fairly or effectively distributed (eg. urban vs. rural allocations), and want more information on exactly where the dollars go.

The technical report is summarized further in Part Three of this document, beginning at page 27.

Panel Presentation: Opportunities in Policing Policy and Practice

NADC councillor Pearl Calahasen, MLA, Grouard, introduced guest speaker Ed Hahn. Mr. Hahn is the Executive Director, Law Enforcement Division, Alberta Solicitor General, Edmonton. He served with the Edmonton Police for 35 years, with considerable experience in the area of community-based policing.



Ed Hahn

"Traditional approaches to crime control are no longer effective," said Mr. Hahn. Police forces in North America and throughout the Commonwealth are looking at community-based and problem-oriented policing as new approaches. Both of these methods rely on the community to identify their own problems. Mr. Hahn saw the challenges to communities as twofold: they have to accept responsibility for policing, and direct their own policing resources to meet their needs. That means the community must first police itself, and then decide where to use professional police services.

Mr. Hahn explained that the Law Enforcement Division promotes and supports community-specific policing. The great variety of communities in Alberta, ranging from summer villages to resource towns to large cities, means a variety of policing methods must be used to meet the policing needs of northern Alberta. The Police Act gives communities a choice of how they want to use their policing resources: they can contract out to the RCMP; they can contract out to a larger nearby municipality; they can establish their own police service; they can combine with other communities to set up a regional police force. As well, the Act isolates police services from the political power of mayors and town councils, and allows for Community Advisory Committees to be set up. Mr. Hahn stressed that the RCMP can offer advice and suggestions, statistics and programs, but it can't dictate how a community should be policed.

Mr. Hahn said he was pleased with the new direction policing was taking. He mentioned community successes like victim services units, campaigns against drunk driving, local constables in aboriginal communities, and youth advisory justice committees as examples. "Our society has strayed far from the days where we once took seriously our collective and individual responsibilities for policing," he said.

Bill Donahue

Bill Donahue, Superintendent and Officer-in-Charge for RCMP contract policing in Alberta, was the second panel speaker. He has served as commander of the RCMP detachments in Edson, St. Paul, and Morinville. He focused on the subject of implementation of service strategies by the RCMP in Alberta.

Mr. Donahue spoke of how the RCMP has had to deal with staffing cuts in the face of increased crime rates in Alberta. Between 1984 and 1991, there was a decrease of 138 RCMP positions in the province. Over the same period, criminal code violations rose by 25 per cent, not including traffic violations. As a result, the RCMP have adopted strategies like prioritizing calls they receive before responding. They have stopped attending small "fender bender" incidents. They have also shifted as many personnel as possible from less busy detachments to busier ones.

"Any complaint of a threat to public safety still receives first priority," said Mr. Donahue. And the new service strategy does mean longer response times for calls assigned a lower priority. Yet the overtime budget of the Alberta RCMP is still considerable, with the equivalent of 68 person-years paid for in 1990. As well, officers volunteered a total of 78 person-years of service without pay in the same year.

Mr. Donahue said he believes that the Community Advisory Committee is the best way for communities to tailor RCMP service to their needs. He mentioned initial resistance to CAC's both in the police force and from some communities. But he asked that detachment commanders and community members make the effort to ensure effective community input into RCMP service priorities. He said the RCMP must emphasize crime prevention and community-based programs, and assign some policing tasks to other groups or agencies in the community.

Small Group Discussions

Reporters from Small Group Discussions: (L to R.) Marlin Sexsmith (moderator), Irene Salisbury, Bernie Kreiner, Don Baird, Floyd McLennan, Harvey Cunningham

Delegates were able to attend two small group discussions over the course of the seminar. They chose from five topics:

- Community Involvement in Policing
- Policing in Native Communities
- The Justice System
- Future Policing Roles
- Financing of Policing Services

Each small group used a series of questions to help bring out the main issues. The questions were:

1. What do you think are the top three emerging issues in the north with respect to this topic?

2. What practical measures are needed to improve upon the first issue just discussed?

3. What practical measures are needed to improve upon the second issue just discussed?

4. Looking back at the discussion, what is the single most important message this group would like the NADC to carry forward to government and the RCMP about this topic?

Reports from Small Group Discussions

Immediately after the second set of small group discussions, reporters and recorders gathered to compile and distil notes from the five different workshops. The results were then presented to the whole group.

Group A - Community Involvement in Policing

Reporting: Irene Salisbury, Councillor, Town of High Prairie

Key Issues:

1. Policing should be more than a legislated, dictated service — it is a shared responsibility.

2. A need for better communication between police and community.

3. A need for greater local involvement in priority setting and policing decisions (e.g., detachment location, community service orders).

Suggested Actions:

1. Establish Community Advisory Committees. It is imperative that these committees:

- be effective
- have broad community support and involvement
- be tailored to community needs and character
- be initiated by the community
- have the active and willing participation of the police

Main message:

Communities must take responsibility for their own protection and well being.

Group B - Policing in Native Communities

Reporting: Harvey Cunningham, Metis Settlements Transition Commission

Key Issues:

1. Need for officers with increased cultural awareness and respect for the community.
2. Insufficient communication and involvement between police and community.
3. Need to adjust policing policies and procedures to fit the unique needs of each community.
4. Lack of funding and support for innovative policing programs.
5. Need for corrections that emphasize individual and community responsibility.

Suggested Actions:

1. Involve the community in the selection, hiring, and orientation of police.
2. Increase RCMP presence in the community (e.g., satellite offices, special constables).
3. Introduce native culture as a basis for community policing.
4. Develop and implement community-specific policing strategies.
5. Create a provincially funded program for policing Metis communities (similar to Aboriginal Policing Program).
6. Expand youth justice committee concept to all age groups.
7. Develop native-run and -staffed police organizations.

Main messages:

Police services should be accountable to individual communities.

Ultimately, regional native policing services are needed.

RCMP need to better educate and communicate their purpose and services to native youth.

Group C - Impact of the Justice System on Policing

Reporting: Floyd McLennan, Mayor, Grande Cache

Key Issues:

1. Philosophical differences between punishment and rehabilitation lead to confusion of roles and priorities within the criminal justice system.
2. Unnecessary delays and inappropriate sentencing is a serious problem.
3. Ineffective punishment and rehabilitation is resulting in repeat offenders and higher policing costs.

Suggested Actions:

Issue #1: Confusion between Rehabilitation and Punishment

1. Government should draft a clear statement of philosophy for the criminal justice system based on public consultation. The final product would address the special circumstances in northern Alberta.
2. Legislators should reflect public interest on specific issues.
3. Priorize the rules to rehabilitate first offenders and punish repeat offenders.
4. Rehabilitation must be available where high cost and high crime rates exist.
5. Redirect resources (recovered from system changes) toward crime prevention.

Issue #2: Lack of accountability and delays in the court system

1. Have community input into appropriate sentencing policies.
2. Review accountability and consistency of sentencing in the court system.
3. The Attorney General and the Law Society should examine the negative impact court delays have on policing costs, witnesses, and the attitude of the public (particularly youth), toward the criminal justice system.

Main message:

The criminal justice system is not working well in northern Alberta, given the high cost of policing and the level of public alienation and cynicism towards the system.

Group D - Future Policing Roles

Reporting: Inspector Don Baird, RCMP "K" Division, Edmonton

Key Issues:

1. Police need to be peace keepers rather than law enforcers.
2. A need for greater police presence in the community, through satellite stations, etc.
3. Community and police are not working together enough.
4. Police lack orientation towards the communities they serve.
5. Police workloads are too great due to an inadequate community sharing of policing responsibilities.

Suggested Actions:

1. Match police officers with the communities they serve, taking their performance and career goals into account.
2. Train police in local community relations so they know local leaders and use them as resources.
3. Have the police seek community participation in problem solving and communication through forums, Community Advisory Committees, and proactive detachment commanders.

Main messages:

Police officers have to be more responsive to the community and the community's needs.

The community should take over some of the police workload so that officers can do their jobs more effectively.

Group E - Financing of Policing Services

Reporting: Bernie Kreiner, Administrator, Town of Slave Lake

Key Issues:

1. No community involvement in managing local RCMP costs.
2. A lack of community understanding of police cost/revenue structure.

Suggested Actions:

1. Allow communities to work with RCMP on managing police resources such as: staff, benefits, procedures, equipment, and facilities.
2. Make a philosophical shift to address local needs with a customer/service focus.
3. Have police be accountable to the local police commission or town council.
4. Have communities set policing priorities by blending community objectives with a policing approach.
5. Show communities how grant formulas are determined, and how fines and revenues are distributed.

Main message:

Have more community input and control over RCMP costs and priorities by striking a new balance between RCMP independence and accountability to the community.

Seminar Summary Panel:

Impressions and Directions for Policing in Northern Alberta

NADC chairman Bob Elliott introduced the three members of the summary panel for the Policing in Northern Alberta Seminar.

Cleve Cooper

Cleve Cooper, Chief Superintendent of RCMP "K" Division, Edmonton, opened his talk by remarking on the tremendous acceleration of events in the policing world in the last 10 years. Trends like an aging population, growing immigration levels, technological change, and increasingly complex legal issues are posing ever greater challenges to police forces like the RCMP. Police now have to deal with hi-tech and white collar crime. They need cross-cultural and language training to better understand the diverse communities they serve. The RCMP must also deal with an increase in age-related crimes like elder abuse, and traffic offences caused by behavioral problems due to Alzheimer's disease.

Mr. Cooper pointed out the high cost of policing today, and how that causes policing dollars to compete with resources for other service agencies. This has resulted in policies like "service strategies," which means reducing services to be more cost-effective. User-pay policing is another possibility. Such a system is already in place to compensate the police for an increasing number of false break-in alarms. Mr. Cooper talked about increased stress on police caused by overtime work, excessive court time, and calls for greater accountability to the public.

For effective policing, Mr. Cooper believes that ongoing cooperation and dialogue between police and the community is necessary. As well, the less time spent in police vehicles, in court, and in the office, the better. As police are forced to reduce their services in the face of dwindling budgets, they will be encouraged to emphasize crime prevention over law enforcement. They will also be given more autonomy in how they do their jobs. Mr. Cooper pointed to the "futuristic management concept" being tested in two Alberta communities. This two-year program is the only one in Canada where RCMP unit commanders are given autonomy in how they conduct the day-to-day operations of their detachment. Mr. Cooper closed his comments by reminding delegates of the return to the original philosophy of policing: the police are the public, and the public are the police.

Albert Moghrabi

Albert Moghrabi, Councillor for the Town of Lac La Biche, stressed the importance of crime prevention versus law enforcement. Addressing the conditions that lead to criminal behaviour, like poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, and racism, pays great dividends. One of the benefits is reduced crime and law enforcement costs. "Crime costs — crime prevention pays," he said. He believed that the Community Advisory Committee was the way for the community to address the causes of crime.

Mr. Moghrabi spoke of some of the problems he saw with today's policing. He mentioned the Cawsey report, titled "Justice on Trial — Report of the Task Force on the Criminal Justice System and its Impact on the Indian and Metis People of Alberta." Many of its conclusions were shared by him and the other delegates: the criminal justice system is too centralized, the Young Offenders Act is too lenient and doesn't encourage rehabilitation, the notable level of public cynicism towards the justice system. He then returned to the theme of community-based policing. "Communities must take responsibility for their own health and well-being," he said. This means getting citizens to participate in Community Advisory Committees. It also includes cooperation with municipal governments, the business community, and the social and justice services. Mr. Moghrabi said that municipal cost containment is important for local growth. He finished by encouraging delegates to take the conclusions reached in the workshops back to their communities. And he hoped the same conclusions would be strongly communicated to the provincial cabinet by the Northern Alberta Development Council.

Chris Braiden

Edmonton Police Service Superintendent Chris Braiden was the final speaker on the panel. He summed up by commenting on five themes that are important when attempting to change the way a policing and justice system performs: mindset, ideas, community, system, and leadership.

Mr. Braiden said that the police system has become a creation of its own "program" mindset. The police would typically devise programs to deal with significant problems that the public expected them to handle. The language and behaviour required to maintain all those programs soon became the status quo. Mr. Braiden called for a "bureaucratic garage sale," an examination into the nooks and crannies of the system to see what is no longer needed. Unwanted, broken, and ineffective programs would be "sold" at the garage sale, freeing up spending money for bigger priorities. But along with these practical changes would have to come a change in language. The culture of programs and bureaucratic

methods would have to be broken by a change in mindset and in language. Mr. Braiden suggested adapting the golden rule to policing: "police others as you would have them police you."

If we really want to overhaul the ways of policing, we need mind-stretching ideas, said Mr. Braiden. If these ideas don't terrify or force the status quo to suffer, then the ideas aren't effective. No policing conventions have yet disappeared or suffered as a result of any of the proposed new solutions to policing problems.

We have come to rely on governments to provide our community needs, said Mr. Braiden. This role was once filled by the church, the family, the schools, and neighborhoods. Ironically, we are more selfish now than ever before, yet we need the communities just mentioned more than ever. Mr. Braiden sees a lack of humility as a major problem of law enforcement agencies. Instead of starting "wars" on drugs or crime or poverty, decision-makers must first admit they don't know the answers to these problems. And the public they serve must stop depending on them for the answers.

Mr. Braiden noted that all the components of the criminal justice system "live in different worlds." The police, the judges, and the lawyers measure success differently, and have different rewards and objectives. This amounts to speaking different languages. Mr. Braiden suggested that instead of these groups having their own cliques where they gathered to talk about each other, they would do well to combine their cliques and talk to each other.

"The leadership needed to resurrect a community-based policing and justice system can't be bought or created," said Mr. Braiden, "but it can be discovered." If we wait around for someone to lead us out of the mess we're in, then we're just as liable to be led into another, he said. People must stand up and take the initiative themselves. He encouraged leaders to operate on the principles of serving others and of earning the respect of others. Mr. Braiden left delegates with these words to think about: "If our ship hasn't come in, we should get off our fannies and swim out to her."

Provincial Address

Stephen West

Honorable Stephen West, Alberta's Solicitor General, was the final speaker at the seminar. Dr. West remarked how he came into the position of Solicitor General as a lay person, having been trained as a veterinarian. He has been most struck by the apparent tolerance we have for crime in our society. "A large number of the 17,000 Albertans currently under some form of court disposition should be dealt with elsewhere," he said. The limits of tolerance have been pushed back to the point where our corrections system is not teaching corrective behaviour. Dr. West said too many liberties are being given to offenders in institutions. This sends the message that the penalties for breaking the law are not very tough.

Dr. West supported the idea of a new model for the justice system, a "paradigm shift." The community must get involved so that fewer offenders get tied up in the court system. A balance between rehabilitation, counselling, and the practical limits of what a society can bear is needed. "Crime is dominating in spite of the best efforts of our system," he said. The current perception is that it's easier to get punished for a small crime than a major one.

"The Solicitor General's department will be examining itself," said Dr. West. It will try to toughen up sentencing and parole of criminals. It will consult and support police forces and correctional facilities. It will admit that it doesn't know all the answers, and it will strive to change both the perception and the reality that the justice system isn't working the way it should.

Seminar Adjournment

Bob Elliott

NADC Chairman Bob Elliott thanked the Solicitor General and all the guest speakers and delegates. Dr. Elliott expressed his personal pleasure with the enthusiasm of the delegates, and assured them the Northern Alberta Development Council would communicate the recommendations put together at the seminar to the provincial government.

He asked delegates to fill out seminar evaluation forms, and closed the Policing in Northern Alberta Seminar.

List of Delegates

Name	Organization	Community
Melvin Abraham	Frog Lake Band	Frog Lake
Saran Ahluwalia	Northern Alberta Development Council	Cold Lake
Blaine Alexander	Town of Fox Creek	Fox Creek
Dan Anderson	Town of Lac La Biche	Lac La Biche
Don Baird	"K" Division Planning Branch	Edmonton
Burnice Bamping	Peace River Police Commission	Peace River
Jerry Beach	Village of Rycroft	Rycroft
Michael Benson	Native Counselling Services	Lac La Biche
Edwina Bobocel	Athabasca R.E.D. Association	Athabasca
Amanda Boisvert	Native Counselling Services	Slave Lake
Lucien Bourassa	Improvement District #18 South	Lac La Biche
Terry Bourque	Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement	Caslan
Brenda Bourque-Stratichuk	Community Advisory Committee	Lac La Biche
Chris Bruntlett	Town of Slave Lake	Slave Lake
Richard Butler	Solicitor General Department	Edmonton
Pearl Calahasen	MLA, Lesser Slave Lake	Grouard
Alvina Cardinal	Fishing Lake Metis Settlement	Sputinow
Belva Cardinal	Metis Settlement General Council	Edmonton
John Cardinal	Woodland Cree Band	Cadotte Lake
Joseph Cardinal	Woodland Cree Band	Cadotte Lake
Charles Cardinal	Elizabeth Metis Settlement	Grand Centre
Lydia Cardinal	Elizabeth Metis Settlement	Grand Centre
Mike Cardinal	MLA, Athabasca-Lac La Biche	Athabasca
John Chase	Alberta Management Group	Edmonton
Sandra Ciurysek	Northern Development Branch	Peace River
John Coli	Police Commission	Lac La Biche
Cleve Cooper	RCMP	Edmonton
John Crisp	Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement	Paddle Prairie
Harvey Cunningham	Metis Settlements Transition Commission	Edmonton
Archie Cunningham	AVC Lesser Slave Lake	High Prairie
Gerald Cunningham	Metis Settlements Transition Commission	Edmonton
Jocelynne Dery	Dr. Mary Savage Crisis Centre	Grand Centre
Richard DesRosiers	Fort Saskatchewan Correction Centre	Fort Saskatchewan
Bill Donahue	Contract Policing Branch, "K" Division	Edmonton
Roy Doonanco	Police Commission	Bonnyville
Ann Dort-MacLean	City of Fort McMurray	Fort McMurray
Sam Drader	Grande Prairie Police Committee	Grande Prairie
Thelma Dreger	M.D. of Spirit River #133	Spirit River
Pete Drieder	Town of Athabasca	Athabasca
Max Edgar	Northern Development Branch	Peace River
Bob Elliott	MLA, Grande Prairie and Chairman, NADC	Beaverlodge
Christopher Favel	Special Constable	Wabasca
James Fell	RCMP	St. Paul
Berkley Ferguson	County of Athabasca #12	Athabasca

Name	Organization	Community
George Giroux	Driftpile Band Police	Driftpile
James Gladue	Fort McKay Indian Band	Fort McKay
Elsie Gladue	Bigstone Indian Band	Desmarais
Myron Goyan	Town of Cold Lake	Cold Lake
Ed Hahn	Solicitor General Department	Edmonton
Greg Halinda	Northern Development Branch	Edmonton
Christine Hoffman	Crisis Intervention Association	Lac La Biche
Emile Houle	Community Education Committee	High Prairie
Peter Hupka	Village of Boyle	Boyle
Dianne Ireland	Metis Association of Alberta	Peace River
Shell Kelly	Lesser Slave Lake Indian Reg. Council	Edmonton
Diana Knight	Northern Alberta Development Council	Valleyview
Edgar Koehler	County of Athabasca	Athabasca
Art Krefting	M.D. of Spirit River #133	Spirit River
Helmut Kreiner	Town of Whitecourt	Whitecourt
Bernie Kreiner	Town of Slave Lake	Slave Lake
Lynn Kreke	Northern Development Branch	Peace River
Robert L'Hirondelle	Metis Settlement Transition Commission	Edmonton
Larry Langager	Northern Alberta Development Council	St. Paul
Eileen Langstaff	Grande Prairie Womens' Residence Assoc.	Grande Prairie
Russ Langston	RCMP	Lac La Biche
Dave Lashuk	Town of St. Paul	St. Paul
Marie Lavoie	Lakelands FCSS	Slave Lake
Garry Legault	Town of Bonnyville	Bonnyville
John Leskiw	Improvement District #18 South	Lac La Biche
Tom Lett	Improvement District #18 South	Lac La Biche
Bill Lewiski	Improvement District #18 South	Lac La Biche
Don Lussier	Northern Alberta Development Council	Athabasca
Tom Maccagno	Town of Lac La Biche	Lac La Biche
Dianne MacDonald	Solicitor General of Canada	Saskatoon, SK
Doug MacKnight	Northern Development Branch	Peace River
Alice McKay	Rural Crime Watch	Beaverlodge
Floyd McLennan	Town of Grande Cache	Grande Cache
Geoff Milligan	Northern Development Branch	Peace River
Albert Moghrabi	Town of Lac La Biche	Lac La Biche
Cliff Munroe	Alberta Agriculture	Edmonton
Ken Nanemahoo	Bigstone Indian Band	Desmarais
Colin Needham	Northern Development Branch	Peace River
Jack Newman	Northern Alberta Development Council	Fort Vermilion
Grant Nickless	Attorney General Department	St. Paul
Rick Noskey	Peavine Metis Settlement	Peavine
Garry Peterson	Town of High Level	High Level
Jerry Philipson	John Howard Society	Grande Prairie
Judith Thompson	Alberta Solicitor General	St. Paul

List of Delegates

Name	Organization	Community
Jody Timoffee	Alberta Mental Health	Lac La Biche
Tony Tonsi	Lakeland Security	St. Paul
Doug Topinka	Town of Valleyview	Valleyview
John Trefanenko	Town of St. Paul	St. Paul
Nick Verbisky	Police Commission	Lac La Biche
Marvin Piochon	Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement	Caslan
Doug Piquette	Community Futures	Lac La Biche
Brian Pitcairn	Tallcree School Division	Fort Vermilion
Stanley Pixley	Lesser Slave Lake Indian Reg. Council	Edmonton
Dusty Powder	Fishing Lake Metis Settlement	Sputinow
Mike Power	Town of Grand Centre	Grand Centre
Jeff Protz	Northern Development Branch	Peace River
Tim Rebrowich	Wandering River & Dist. Local Dev. Society	Wandering River
Bruce Rosenberger	Improvement District #23	Fort Vermilion
Irene Salisbury	Town of High Prairie	High Prairie
Marie Savill	Lesser Slave Lake FCSS	High Prairie
Dan Schultz	Businessman	Lac La Biche
Marlin Sexauer	Northern Alberta Development Council	Whitecourt
Rick Sloan	Northern Development Branch	Peace River
Danny Smyl	Smyl Motors	St. Paul
Leon Stocki	County of Athabasca School Division	Athabasca
Don Streeper	Community Advisory Committee	Grande Prairie
Chris Teed	Mayor's Task Force on Crime Prevention	Fort McMurray
Hugh Seaton	Northern Development Branch	Peace River
Jeff Victor	Lakeland Security Ltd.	St. Paul
John Waddell	Public School System	Fort McMurray
Joseph Ward	Driftpile Band	Driftpile
Ted Weiden	Alberta Management Group	Edmonton
Hon. Dr. Stephen West	Solicitor General	Edmonton
Jake Wiebe	Improvement District #23	La Crete
Wayne Wilson	Solicitor General Department	Edmonton
Jim Woodward	County of Athabasca	Athabasca
Duane Young	Community Advisory Committee	Lac La Biche

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Part Three

Research Findings

Introduction

Study Background

In response to recent public briefs about policing costs and services, the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC), in cooperation with the RCMP and Alberta Solicitor General, commissioned a study to review policing in northern Alberta. The objectives of the study were:

- to identify municipalities with unusually high policing expenditures
- to review factors that led to high policing costs
- to describe community involvement in policing
- to identify existing or new cost-effective policing strategies

A steering committee was established to oversee the study, consisting of the following members:

- Albert Moghrabi, councillor, Town of Lac La Biche
- Starr Bulmer, councillor, Mackenzie Regional Planning Commission, Berwyn
- Amanda Boisvert, Native Counselling Services of Alberta, Slave Lake
- Larry Langager, councillor, Northern Alberta Development Council, St. Paul
- Supt. Rob Leatherdale, RCMP, Peace River
- Jim Woodward, councillor, County of Athabasca
- Clifford Freeman, councillor, Driftpile Indian Band, Driftpile
- Alice McKay, Rural Crime Watch, Beaverlodge
- George Keen, administrator, City of Grande Prairie
- Garry Peterson, administrator, Town of High Level
- Inspector Don Baird, RCMP, Edmonton
- Wayne Wilson, Solicitor General, Edmonton
- Colin Needham, Northern Development Branch, Peace River

The steering committee assisted the NADC to select the consulting firm Alberta Management Group to undertake this research project. The study commenced in January of 1992 and involved four major data collection phases:

1. Review of Trends in Community-Based Policing — a review of the literature to identify current trends in community-based policing which may be applicable in northern Alberta.
2. Review of Cost and Crime Statistics — an analysis of crime and cost data for RCMP detachments in the NADC area to identify communities with significantly high crime rates and policing costs relative to other communities in Alberta.
3. Community Visits on Policing Issues and Solutions — visits to nine northern communities to discuss policing issues and potential strategies to reduce costs or improve services.
4. Survey of Policing Issues in Northern Alberta — a comprehensive survey of northern communities to explore perceptions and opinions about crime and public disorder problems, cost containment measures and alternative modes of policing.

Trends In Community Based Policing

Two approaches to policing are commonly presented: the "professional" model and the "community-based " model. In the professional model, police emphasize rapid response times and technologies such as the motor vehicle and two-way radio. Recently, however, questions have been raised about the effectiveness of this approach and the underlying assumption that "crime fighting" is the principal role of the police.

In the community-based model police roles are seen to be broader, consisting of peace keeping and problem solving to deal with the complex problems of modern society. Principles underlying community-based policing include:

- Crime is the joint responsibility of the community and the police. Police and community members work closely together to find effective ways to solve problems by focusing on the causes of crime and by targeting specific measures to combat problems.
- Police are involved in educating, activating, supporting and coordinating the self-policing capacity of the community.
- Citizens have a role in determining policing priorities. They then help police and the judicial system deal with these priorities by providing information and participating in community policing efforts.

Community-based policing frees officers from the isolation of the patrol car and puts them into face-to-face contact with people. Community-based policing includes measures such as: satellite or store-front offices; emphasis on foot patrol; priorizing calls for service; and involvement of officers in organizing and operating community crime prevention initiatives.

Community-based policing is fundamentally a different "management philosophy" that governs the way police carry out their role in the community. It should not be confused with "community involvement" in policing (for example through crime prevention programs such as Crime Watch or Block Parents), which can function under both models of policing. Community-based policing does, however, place greater emphasis on a cooperative relationship between police and community residents.

Northern Crime and Policing Costs

Provincial data on crime rates and policing costs for 1988 to 1990[1] were analyzed to identify northern areas with abnormally high crime rates and policing costs. Comparisons were made between communities with the two main policing arrangements in northern Alberta:

- **Municipal Detachments** - towns and cities having individual contracts with the RCMP for policing services within their municipal boundaries (61 detachments including 18 in the NADC area). Under a cost-sharing formula, communities with populations over 2,500 are required to pay 70% of the RCMP contract cost, and those with populations over 15,000 are required to pay 90%. The federal government pays the residual share (excluding RCMP overtime charges and other support costs borne by the municipality).

- **Provincial Detachments** - areas covered under a global contract between the province and the RCMP for policing services in rural areas (106 detachments, including 30 in the NADC area). Communities with populations under 2,500 are typically policed from a rural detachment, although they may opt to contract directly with the RCMP (as described above).

For each detachment in the province, a set of key ratios was calculated to compare crime and policing costs across various communities in Alberta. The information was then analyzed to identify those detachments with ratios that ranked in the top 25% provincially (i.e., had "high" crime rates or policing costs relative to other detachments in the province). Briefly, the findings were as follows:

- **Number of Offences per Thousand Population (Crime Rate)** - 46% of the detachments in the NADC area fell into the high crime rate category (i.e., had crime rates ranking in the top 25% provincially). In contrast, only 17% of other detachments in Alberta fell into the high crime rate category, indicating generally higher rates of crime in northern Alberta.

- **Number of Offences per Officer** - 48% of detachments in the NADC area also ranked high in offences per officer, compared to only 16% of other detachments in Alberta, indicating significantly higher criminal workloads in many northern detachments.

- **Policing Cost per Capita** - 47% of detachments in the NADC area ranked high in terms of policing cost per capita compared to only 16% of other detachments in Alberta, reflecting the generally higher staffing levels in many northern detachments needed to deal with higher crime rates.

- **Policing Cost as a Percentage of Municipal Revenue** - 33% of municipal detachments in the NADC area ranked high in terms of policing costs as a percentage of municipal revenue (versus 21% of other detachments in Alberta).

- **Police Mills** - 50% of municipal detachments in the NADC area were high in terms of police mills versus 14% of other detachments in Alberta. The concerns of many northern communities regarding the tax burden in relation to policing services was confirmed.

Only 17% of northern detachments in the NADC area had high Policing Cost Growth Rate suggesting that policing cost increases have been felt to the same or greater extent in many southern municipalities. There was little difference found in the proportions of detachments that were high in terms of police costs as a percentage of operating budget (28% versus 23%).

The above results suggest strongly that many northern communities face both high crime rates and high costs of policing to cope with that crime. The following northern communities were in both the High Crime and High Policing Cost categories:

Municipal Detachments:	**Rural Detachments:**
-Athabasca	-Assumption
-Fort McMurray	-Desmarais
-Grand Centre	-Faust
-Fort Chipewyan	-Grande Prairie
-High Level	-Fort McMurray
-High Prairie	-Grande Cache
-Lac La Biche	-Red Earth Creek
-St. Paul	-Slave Lake
-Valleyview	

In total, nine of the 18 municipal detachments and eight of the 30 rural detachments in the NADC area were in both the high crime and policing cost category. Only three detachments were in both the *Low Crime* and *Low Policing Cost* categories (Fairview, Grimshaw and Spirit River).

1 A three-year average was used in calculations to balance out variations in municipal expenditures and taxation patterns.

Community Visits on Policing Issues

Visits were made to nine northern communities to gather detailed information about policing issues and to identify innovative ways communities have addressed policing issues.[2] The findings are summarized in the following four topic areas:

- Community Involvement in Policing
- Role of the Police in the Community
- Impacts of the Justice System on Policing
- Financing of Policing Services

In addition to the general findings, issues unique to native communities have been highlighted in each of the sections.

Community Involvement in Policing

Although community residents clearly have an important role to play in policing, and may volunteer in a wide range of programs to assist in crime prevention and enforcement, most communities appeared to have only a few active and strongly functioning programs. The key issues relating to community involvement in policing were found to be:

- **Residents Reporting Crimes** - For a variety of reasons, residents appear reluctant to get personally involved in reporting crimes to the police. Apathy, lack of knowledge, fear of reprisal and loss of confidence in the justice system were key factors noted.
- **Community Input into Policing** - Despite the existence of Community Advisory (or similar) Committees in most communities, many residents still do not know what police priorities are, and feel they have little ability to influence policing policies and priorities as they apply to the community.
- **Community Programming** - Communities recognize their role in providing the recreation and social programs needed to prevent crime, and the treatment programs needed to deal with offenders. Treatment programs (e.g., alcohol, battering) appear to be lacking in many communities, or programming is not adequately reaching those (especially youth) at risk of falling into crime. Lack of volunteer resources or insufficient volunteer recruitment were noted as significant problems affecting community-based programs.

A number of solutions were suggested to enhance the involvement of the community in policing, including:

- Get residents to take more responsibility for reporting crime by changing their attitudes about civic responsibility in policing, informing them about crime in the community, telling them how to report crimes, and by making the court process less onerous.
- Establish recreation programs and activities targeted specifically to those involved in crime or at risk of becoming involved.
- Establish or expand social and offender treatment programs.
- Provide funding to recruit and mobilize volunteers for crime prevention programs.
- Find ways to allow greater community input into policing policies and priorities.

All detachments in the communities visited make use of auxiliary constables. Community Advisory (or equivalent) Committees were active or underdeveloped in most communities. Some communities had significant crime prevention initiatives. In addition, several communities have found interesting ways for volunteers to assist the police in such areas as providing security at community functions, returning stolen property, assisting victims, taking evidence, providing court orientation and disseminating crime prevention information. Several communities also have exemplary programs in some traditional areas such as Citizens on Patrol and Crime Watch.

Role of the Police in the Community

Although there was general support for the RCMP and sympathy for their job difficulties, community representatives voiced a number of concerns about the way police carry out their role. Key issues were:

- **Policing Priorities** - Although the RCMP have specifically assigned members to crime prevention and community awareness functions in most detachments, many residents feel that not enough crime prevention activity is being carried out by the RCMP in the schools and with community groups. Lack of problem solving by the RCMP and the community relating to crime was also noted in some communities, particularly those without well-established Community Advisory/Crime Prevention Committees.
- **Policing Style** - RCMP are often perceived more as "law enforcers" than as "peace keepers" or problem solvers, staying in their cars and appearing mainly to pick someone up or to watch for someone to break the law. Native people were particularly concerned that police style is sometimes too aggressive and enforcement-oriented.
- **Involvement in the Community** - A recurring complaint was that residents do not know their police as well as they would like. Many police were seen to isolate themselves, tending to stay aloof from residents on a social level and socializing mainly with other RCMP. It was also noted that communities do little to reach out to new police officers to help them integrate socially or to become culturally oriented.

2 Visits were made to Athabasca, Bonnyville, Whitecourt, High Prairie, Grande Prairie, Grimshaw, High Level, Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan. In total, 237 individuals attended group meetings or interviews, including agency representatives, elected officials and community residents.

Solutions suggested included:

- Dedicate more resources to problem-solving and prevention, particularly to working with youth (schools and sports).
- Do more "peace keeping" and talking, less "rule enforcing" and laying of charges; do more foot patrol; keep side-arms less visible.
- Improve screening of recruits and cross-cultural training for officers involved with native communities.
- Encourage greater social interaction and involvement of officers in community organizations.

Satellite offices are being established in remote communities. These enhance the policing presence and improve the relationship between residents and the RCMP. Officers are also being assigned to zones in some detachments, although manpower and geographical constraints appear to be preventing fully dedicated zone assignments or significant foot patrol efforts. Formal crime prevention committees are functioning in a few communities. A pilot project in the Grande Prairie detachment is seeking ways to simplify internal police procedures to make the detachment more efficient and autonomous. This includes more delegation of decision-making to front-line officers.

Impacts of the Justice System on Policing

Problems within the justice system were seen to be having a significant impact on policing resources. The most serious concerns raised were:

- ***Deterrence*** - The justice system was not perceived to be effective in deterring crime because offenders were seen to be "getting off" on technicalities or receiving "soft" sentences, leading to a high incidence of repeat offenders taxing policing resources. Youth crime and the Young Offenders Act were of particular concern.

- ***Community Justice*** - The justice system was seen to be placing too much emphasis on punishment and not enough on restitution. The role of the community in dealing with disputes has been taken away by a "institutionalized" justice system which does little to make offenders accountable to their victims as a sanction against their behavior.

- ***Court Use of Police Resources*** - Recent developments in Canadian justice have added to the burden of police paperwork. Court delays and perceived abuses of the court process through Legal Aid were also seen as wasting significant police resources involved in investigation and testimony. Court scheduling problems further add to member time in court as well as overtime charges when members are required to come to court on their day off. Finally, most detachments are required to supply members for prisoner escort and courtroom security which takes significant manpower in some detachments.

A variety of solutions were offered to improve the effectiveness of the justice system in deterring crime and to increase the efficiency of the court system in its use of police resources:

- Improve the resources available to Crown prosecutors to allow better preparation of court cases.
- Toughen penalties to enhance deterrence.
- Get more input from the community and victims to make the system more responsive to community values and to make sentencing more appropriate and effective.
- Make more use of restitution and improve the way restitution and community service are implemented to gain greater value to both the offender and the community.
- Improve rehabilitation programming for repeat offenders.
- Decriminalize some offences relating to alcohol.
- Make the courts more accountable for the way police resources are used by improving scheduling and reducing court delays.
- Make the province pay for court security and prisoner escort.

Some action on these solutions has been taken by communities, particularly in the area of sentencing where a great deal of progress has been made with Youth Justice Advisory Committees. Other successful initiatives have been taken in the areas of victim impact statements, offender work crews and rehabilitation programming, court scheduling and child/wife abuse investigation.

Financing of Policing Services

Changes to the justice system and to the roles of the community and the RCMP are considered to be longer-term measures to deal with crime and reduce high workloads. These corrective measures do not, however, address the immediate problems facing municipalities and the province with the costs of policing. Two key issues relating to policing costs were encountered:

- ***Use of Alternative Policing Resources*** - Several communities have added or are actively considering adding their own police to supplement coverage by the RCMP (special constables, band constables, bylaw officers). A number of concerns were raised, however, including the need for a cost-containment strategy, loss of police independence and potential teamwork difficulties between the RCMP and other policing personnel.

- ***Funding of Policing Services*** - Municipalities with RCMP contracts felt the current funding structure was inequitable, leading to large differences in taxes among communities. A number of problem areas were noted, including contributions by rural residents, the federal cost-sharing formula, and the provincial police grant, which was not felt to adequately reflect the circumstances in each municipality (crime rates, non-resident crime, municipally - versus federally-supplied facility, geographic size and population density).

Suggested solutions included:

- Use more auxiliary constables, bylaw officers and special constables and increase their training and authority.
- Set up a regional native police service and a provincial highway patrol.
- Amalgamate all protective services (police, fire and ambulance).
- Assess rural residents for policing.
- Return fine revenues to municipalities paying for policing services.
- Establish a cost-sharing formula based on smaller population increments and a provincial equity grant to equalize police mill rates across communities.
- Increase fines and fees and apply these to policing costs ("user pay").

Many municipalities have supplemented the RCMP with bylaw officers and/or special constables, although formal protocols between the RCMP and community police were noted only in one community (Whitefish/Gift Lake). There is little that municipalities can do on their own to change the current funding structure. A few municipalities with RCMP contracts do share the cost of clerical support staff with nearby rural communities.

Survey of Policing Issues

A survey of northern communities was conducted to explore perceptions and opinions about policing issues, cost containment measures and alternative policing approaches.[3] The results are summarized under the following topic areas:

- Crime and Public Disorder Problems
- Role of the Police in the Community
- Policing Costs

Crime and Public Disorder Problems

Before considering new policing strategies, it was important to obtain views from northerners on the kinds of crime and public disorder of greatest concern to them.

The types of crime and public disorder problems considered most serious overall included:

- drinking and driving
- vandalism
- break and enter/theft
- youth crime
- family violence

These problems were considered to be getting the appropriate amount of attention from police. Drug dealing and speeding/reckless driving were not perceived as receiving as much attention from police as they should, although they were considered somewhat less serious problems overall.

The factors felt to be most important in contributing to crime and public disorder included:

- drug and alcohol abuse
- breakdown of traditional values and ways of living
- family breakdown

Transients and other non-residents were not generally perceived to be contributing significantly to crime.

3 In total, 226 northerners responded to the survey, representing 77 northern communities, including cities, towns, villages, hamlets, Indian reserves, Metis settlements and farms/rural areas. Survey respondents included community residents, elected officials, community agency employees and the RCMP.

The measures thought to be most effective in reducing crime and public disorder included:

- changes in the justice system to deal with young offenders
- earlier intervention to prevent social problems from leading to crime
- more community input to sentencing of convicted offenders
- more freedom for officers to adjust their role to suit the needs of the community
- better coordination and teamwork among police and community agencies
- more involvement of the community in shaping policing policies and priorities
- more community relations training for officers

The results above suggest that problems of greatest concern to communities revolve around underlying social and economic circumstances. This underlines the importance of community action on longer-term social development in preventing crime. Changes to the justice system and in the community approach taken by police were also considered important, as were mechanisms for community input into justice and policing.

Role of the Police

Several survey questions provided insight into the communities' requirements of the police and to the priority placed on various policing activities.

There was strong support for the following regarding the role of the police:

- Officers should be actively involved in community affairs and social events.
- Officers should cultivate an informal, approachable and accessible style in dealing with community residents.
- There should be a direct mechanism whereby the community could influence policing policies and priorities as they apply to the community.
- Enforcement of the law should be the same for residents in all communities.

A little over half of respondents also supported the notion that officers should function primarily as peace keepers rather than law enforcers. This was particularly supported in native communities and cities. Although most respondents did not favor the police enforcing laws according to the values of each community, there was support for residents having input to policing policies and priorities.

The following activities were perceived to be getting a substantially lower priority from police than they should:

- assisting the community to develop crime prevention programs
- identifying causes of crime in the community and designing corrective strategies
- monitoring repeat offenders or potential offenders

Only court-related activities were seen by respondents to be receiving a higher priority than they should, reflecting concerns about police time preparing cases and testifying in court.

Respondents were asked how widely they would support reallocation of current officer priorities to get better crime prevention. The following activities received high support:

- assisting the community to establish crime prevention programs
- mobilizing community resources to address crime and public disorder problems
- conducting community relations and crime awareness presentations
- attending meetings of community organizations with a role in crime prevention
- analysing causes of crime and developing corrective strategies

Consistent with findings from community visits, the survey results suggest that greater emphasis on crime prevention and problem-oriented policing are desired by residents, apparently at the expense of current enforcement and court-related priorities.[4]

Policing Costs

Financial information provided by municipalities with current RCMP contracts shows wide variations among communities in the Policing Cost Per Capita (range: $86 to $141) and in Police Mills (range: 2.00 to 5.53), lending support to the concerns expressed by municipalities about the uneven tax load. The proportion of total policing budget represented by the RCMP contract ranged from 65% to 92%, reflecting different RCMP space arrangements in each municipality and different use levels of other resources such as bylaw officers and special constables. Cost growth rates varied considerably, but all municipalities reported having to raise taxes to pay for the rising costs of policing.

Only 7% of survey respondents thought that too much was being spent on policing, while 39% thought too little was spent, 31% thought the right amount was spent, and 24% did not know. Respondents from native communities and rural areas, as well as RCMP, were more likely than others to think too little was being spent.

4 It is recognized that police may have little control at this time over court-related activity and cannot arbitrarily reduce the priority of these duties, although less enforcement emphasis may result in fewer charges with corresponding reductions in court-related activity. This trade-off was not specifically addressed in the survey.

Policing Challenges In Northern Alberta

The foregoing summary points to factors with a direct influence on costs of policing services and the effectiveness of policing in dealing with crime and public disorder problems in northern Alberta. The findings suggest a number of challenges that, if met, would significantly contribute to crime prevention and cost-effective policing in northern Alberta.

As a fundamental measure, community involvement in policing is indicated to encourage residents to take greater ownership of crime in their community. Other challenges include:

Role of the Police

- to increase the proportion of policing resources dedicated to crime prevention and assisting the community to organize and operate crime prevention programs
- to focus greater police attention on problem-solving and providing mechanisms for direct community involvement in the establishment of policing policies and priorities
- to increase the level of face-to-face contact and communication between residents and police officers
- to increase the involvement of RCMP officers in community affairs
- to enhance the image and functional role of police officers as peace keepers
- to increase the policing presence in rural and remote communities not having a local detachment

The Justice System

- to make the justice system more responsive to community concerns, and more effective in dealing with repeat offenders currently responsible for a significant proportion of police workloads
- to make the court system more efficient in its use of police resources

Financing of Policing Services

- to increase the role, responsibility and employment of community-based people (volunteers, special constables, etc.) in assisting with crime prevention and law enforcement
- to improve the equity of the structure used to fund policing services across Alberta, recognizing the special circumstances of communities in northern Alberta